

Challenges Facing Teaching at Rural Schools: A Review of Related Literature

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Abstract:Traditionally, it has been difficult attracting and retaining teachers and other professionals to teach at school located in rural areas. Consequently, teaching at rural schools continues to deteriorate as the problem of attracting and retaining qualified teachers for quality teaching still remains. The purpose of this study was to review literatures related to the challenges that faced teaching at rural schools, and explain the intensity to which these challenges influenced the quality of teaching at rural schools. The aim was to make necessary recommendations on how the challenges can be dealt with, so that they do not continue to deteriorate teaching at rural schools. Different sources of literatures were reviewed, and data was analysed thematically and discussed within the context of teaching at rural areas, which was the focus of the study.

The study found out that teaching was defined by the struggle to cope with the absence of basic teaching resources, overloaded with teaching and administrative duties, underfunding to schools and poor teacher salaries. In addition, most teachers were not competent in improvising instructional and teaching materials in the absence of sufficiency resources, which has rendered teaching ineffective. Rural school teachers felt isolated, as financial, recreational and health service centres were not easily accessible, which caused low teacher morale, and minimised teaching effectiveness. It was established that most teachers at rural schools were not well paid compared to their counterparts in other professions with comparable levels of education, experience and input towards their work. This disparities demoralised teachers and negatively shaped their teaching output. School authorities should implement the necessary measures to minimise the detrimental effects of these challenges on teaching at rural schools, to enable teachers to teach optimally and improved school performance.

Keywords: Teaching, teachers, rural areas, rural schools rural

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Traditionally, it has been difficult attracting and retaining teachers and other professionals in rural areas (Lock, 2008; Miller, 2012). Teaching at rural schools continues to deteriorate as the problem of attracting and retaining qualified teachers still remains (Heeralal, 2014; Owusu-Acheampong & Williams, 2015). Rural school locations and socio-economic conditions serve as major barriers in attracting, retaining and supporting talented teachers (Elfers & Plecki, 2006).

The World Bank attributed poor learner performance at rural schools to the problem of low retention of high-quality teachers in rural schools (Aziz 2011:6). A high quality teacher is defined as a teacher with the ability to produce desired learner achievement (Mitra, Dangwal & Thadani, 2008). Lack

of talented and quality teachers culminates in poor quality teaching in rural schools, as studies reveals that only capable and professionally qualified teachers can engender quality teaching in schools (Aziz, 2011; Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves & Salgado, 2005; Jimerson, 2003). Quality teaching is an outcome of a quality teacher, which is a coveted position that cannot be achieved by any individual employed to teach. Like any other position, quality teaching is faced by challenges, which this study sought to uncover.

In the last two decades across the continent of Africa there has been a growing anxiety about teaching in rural areas, where approximately 70% of the African population reside (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). The shortage of qualified teachers and poor conditions of teaching are the major factors affecting the quality of teaching in many African rural schools (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). Most parents in rural areas are less educated and have less ability to provide educational support for their children, and are therefore embarrassed to discuss school work with children due to their lack of knowledge (Legotlo, 2014; Mulkeen & Chen, 2008).

The low level of literacy among the parent population of rural communities, placed burden on teachers as they struggle to teach learners whose family backgrounds disadvantages their learning ambitions. Even though parents are generally regarded as primary teachers of their children, their insufficient commitment to the education of their children as reported earlier, signals the hardships teaching is faced with in rural areas. This signal prompted this study to detail the challenges facing teaching at rural schools, with the aim of contributing to the knowledge pool on improving the quality of teaching at rural schools.

II. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

Quality teaching has become the ultimate goal of many education systems across the globe. To realise this goal, more attention should be paid to factors influencing teaching at rural areas, where teaching is generally perceived to be compromised. Even though earlier scholars reveals that teaching at rural schools is faced with challenges, these challenges are yet to be detailed to understand their impacts on teaching and how such impacts can be dealt with. Hence, this study focused on reviewing literatures related to teaching at rural schools, with specific attention on challenges facing teaching.

The review was guided by the following question; what are challenges facing teaching at rural schools? In addressing this question, this review paper sought to name and explain the challenges confronting teachers at rural schools as reported in related literature sources. The aim was to raise awareness about the difficulties teachers were faced with at rural schools, and propose remedies against these difficulties in order to improve the quality of teaching at rural schools.

III. THE FINDINGS OF THE REVIEWS

The related literature was reviewed in search of answers to the question as outlined earlier. The data was analysed thematically, and produced themes which relate to poor working conditions, incompetence, isolation and inadequate rewards as major challenges that faced teaching at rural schools. The themes were explained and interpreted as answers that the review sought to produce. These answers are presented next.

3.1 *Poor working conditions*

In order to deliver high quality teaching and realise optimal learning among learners regardless of their localities, schools must develop, attract and retain good teachers. Working conditions play an important role in enabling schools to deliver high quality teaching. According to Ali, Abdiaziz and Abdigani (2013), working conditions refer to working environment and all existing circumstances affecting the workers in the work place such as working hours, facilities, legal rights, responsibilities, organisational climate and workload.

Working conditions were characterised as poor when the work environment and the circumstances under which teachers perform their work were not favourable for teachers to teach effectively. Noble (2009) emphasises the prevention of poor working conditions, because when employees have negative perceptions about their work environment, they get dissatisfied resulting in less productivity. Due to the impact of poor working conditions on employees' productivity, and in light of the demand for constant improvement in a technologically driven work environment, poor working conditions is a subject of international debate among scholars (Ali, Abdiaziz & Abdigani, 2013; Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). When teachers were not content with their working conditions, their ambitions and willingness to deliver quality teaching were incapacitated.

Even though employees shared the same teaching profession, their working conditions differed as determined by the work environment in which they were teaching. This created injustices where some teachers enjoyed good working conditions whereas some teachers were subjected to poor working conditions. Poor working conditions relative to teaching were found to be less in developed countries due to the availability of requisite resources to provide good working conditions, and were found to be severe in developing countries as there were lack of infrastructure and financial

resources to render teaching effective (Akyeampong & Bennel, 2007; Pitsoe, 2013).

Teaching in developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa was defined by the struggle to cope with the absence of basic teaching resources, overloaded with teaching and administrative duties, underfunding to schools and poor teacher salaries (Alam & Farid, 2011; Gatsinzi, Jesse & Makewa 2014:265). These difficult working conditions intensified the lack of capacity for schools to improve the working conditions of teachers (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Teachers who taught under harsh working conditions, and without sustained attempt to improve their working conditions, failed to teach effectively, thereby making teaching a challenging task at rural schools.

The difference in socio-economic status between urban and rural areas affected the standard of teaching significantly. There was a wide gap between the socio-economic status of urban and rural environments with regard to the material and financial resources which were the means of production (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011). Urban environments were mostly inhabited by people who were often educated and employed with decent salaries and good working conditions (Legotlo, 2014). The availability of essential goods and services in urban areas also meant that schools in urban areas were well-established in terms of resources and facilities, which then attracts good quality teachers to urban schools due to good working conditions (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). Therefore, most teachers preferred to work in urban schools in order to enjoy the positive experiences associated with an urban environment, which then widened disparities between urban and rural schools in terms of services provisions and working conditions (Marwan, Sumintono & Mislán, 2012).

On the other hand, the rural environment were populated with people who were often poor, less educated and unemployed (Legotlo, 2014; Mulkeen & Chen, 2008; National Planning Commission, 2015). Rural residents were usually short of basic services such as clean water, electricity, proper housing and roads infrastructure due to their location and inability to afford and maintain such services. The lack of basic services in the rural environment impacted on the limited resources of schools in rural areas, thereby affecting the potential to attract good teachers for good quality teaching in rural areas. Teachers often shy away from schools in rural environments with their challenging working circumstances, resulting in a lack of good quality teachers with related good quality teaching and ultimate good learner achievement.

In Malaysian schools, poor working conditions was regarded as a factor of dissatisfaction which increased teacher turnover, with teachers leaving for urban schools where there was higher socio-economic status and better teaching support services (Aziz, 2011; NCTAF, 2002; Ramesh, Rao & Jani, 2011). Apart from teachers getting attracted to better teaching resources, urban schools also relied on educated parent population that understood schooling and supports the

education of their children, and could contribute financially for better funded school projects (Marwan et al, 2012). These advantages associated with urban schools teaching, compromised the quality of teaching at rural schools due to quality teacher turnover from rural to urban schools.

Working conditions in rural schools were also influenced by bureaucratic style of management (Marwan et al, 2012). Bureaucracy as the system of governance was meant to ensure that the administration and management of affairs were conducted in compliance with legislation and relevant structures (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008). This governance approach delayed progress at rural schools pertaining to the timely appointment of teachers, as appointing teachers was a fairly long process that involved different departments coordinating the appointment process (Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). The result was that teaching at rural schools remained a delayed process, as the different departments involved in the appointment of teachers were often not close to each other, and in many instances far from one another. This implied the lengthening of the appointment process by excess days or weeks.

On the other hand, bureaucracy in urban areas was effective as urban schools were in cities where the different education departments were located which made the appointment process of teachers easy and quick. On the contrary, rural school principals have to travel long distances to educational departments for administrative and appointments purposes which may take a number of days. This long process of administration involving teacher appointments was detrimental to rural school teaching because, while teachers were waiting for appointment at rural schools which takes long, they may have gotten other appointments in urban schools in the meantime. In addition, the few teachers at rural schools who received no training in multi-grade teaching have to cope without having sufficient colleagues to work with and assist each other. This created difficult working conditions for teachers at rural schools and made teaching a difficult task to perform.

Lack of reliable transport in rural areas compromised rural teachers' mobility as some schools are only reachable by crossing rivers (Marwan et al, 2012; Monk, 2007). This limited mobility demotivated teachers and detracts their attention from teaching at rural schools. In addition, teachers who drove long distances to school because of a lack of housing were more likely to leave their positions at rural schools than teachers who lived in or near the community where the school was located (Lowe, 2006).

Another aspects that diminished the quality of teaching at rural schools was the multi-grade teaching, which created an unsupportive environment for quality teaching. Multi-grade teaching resulted in teaching being less effective in rural schools that practice multi-class teaching as teachers lacked the necessary pedagogic skills to accommodate the needs of learners of different grades, all in the same class. Most rural

schools also lacked facilities for leisure and recreational activities (Towse, ent, Osaki & Kirua, 2002). Together with poor infrastructure and roads, these conditions made teaching at rural schools unbearable to qualified teachers and this diminished the quality of teaching at rural schools (Zvavahera, 2012).

While the introduction of a financial incentive for rural school teachers to promote effective teaching sounds promising, available evidence reveals that such incentive have failed to attract and retain qualified teachers to rural areas (Bush, Bell & Middlewood, 2010; Glazerman, Mckie & Carey, 2009; Milanowski, Longwell-Grice, Saffold, Jones, Schomisch & Odden, 2009; Vegas, 2005). Rural school teachers regarded the financial incentive they received being minimal as it failed to outweigh the hard working conditions under which teachers teach in rural areas (Lavy, 2009). Locating in urban areas is more rewarding as teachers are exposed to opportunities to earn additional income from tutorials and offering classes to students in town, which were limited in the rural environment due to widespread poverty in rural areas (Adedeji & Olanian, 2011).

It was clear that poor working conditions impacted negatively on good quality teaching in rural schools. Although poor working conditions differed from one environment to another, the problem proved to be prominent in rural areas due to factors related to socio-economic circumstances, bureaucracy in administering educational affairs, transport problems to urban areas where education department and offices were situated, the practice of multi-grade teaching and lack of educational facilities. The financial incentive provided to teachers at rural schools failed to improve teaching, as it was deemed not commensurate with the hardships rural teachers were facing, thus dispelled the notion that teachers needed monetary rewards to teach well.

3.2 Inadequate training

An important determinant for learners' success in schools is the presence of adequate training, to produce competent teachers for quality teaching (Hammer, Hughes, McClure, Reeves & Salgado, 2005). Competent teachers are distinguished by a set of professional characteristics that makes them suitable and competent for the teaching profession, which are acquired through intensive training. Inadequate training results in incompetence, as the inability of the teacher to effectively demonstrate the pedagogic content knowledge of their subject, results in learners not learning optimally as a result of poor quality teaching.

The migration pattern of qualified teachers from rural to urban schools is inevitable, resulting in unqualified teachers teaching at rural schools (Marwan et al, 2012; Ncube, 2013). The lack of professional competencies among rural school teaching staff produces a poor standard of teaching as the success of teachers in addressing teaching challenges at rural schools is determined by their professional preparation and competencies (Lingam, 2012).

Teacher training institutions often did not provide specific training for teacher competence within rural school contexts. Teacher training curriculums were inadequate with regard to equipping teachers for a teaching career in rural school setting (Lingam, 2012). Many teacher training institutions are located in urban areas and teaching practice for students often takes place at schools in urban localities (Heeralal, 2014). Some students do their teaching practice in rural communities as their community of origin, however, these students may not go back to their community of origin for work after graduating as they may regard their education as a means of social mobility to locate to urban areas (Lingam, 2012; Mulkeen & Chen, 2008). This cause a shortage of professional, competent teachers in rural communities for quality teaching.

As the content of the teacher training curriculum was not inclusive of the realities at rural schools, teachers' suitability to rural areas can be attained by specifically improving teachers' professional competencies for the circumstances experienced in rural areas (Hu, 2007). Teachers need adequate professional preparation during their initial teacher training programme, which entails all content and contextual issues teachers will be facing at rural schools. These contextual issues may relate to isolation from essential goods and services, living and working with learners from poverty stricken families, insufficient instructional resources and lack of recreational facilities. It is the adequate preparation for all these content and contextual issues that can help improve teacher competence in rural areas, and promote effective teaching with related increased learner performance (Moreno, 2007; Robinson, 2008).

Due to the failure of the curriculum content to accommodate the specific issues revolving around rural environments, teachers deployed to rural schools became incompetent as they cannot cope with the hardships they experience. Lack of opportunities for in-service training to train teachers to specifically work in rural areas contributes significantly to incompetence among rural school teachers. These in-service training provisioning for rural school teachers are essential as they assist to increase teacher competence, increase the appeal of the rural teaching and provide an attractive long term teaching career (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Lock, Green, Hastings, Cooper & White, 2009).

The geographical locations of rural schools deprived teachers of access to support services that would improve their professional competence as rural schools are difficult to reach (Hammer et al, 2005). This results in teachers at rural schools being deprived of support services such as visits by advisory officials or school inspectors. A lack of opportunities for formal, workshop-based related professional developments also contributes to incompetence at rural schools. In some instances, professional development is perceived as a personal ambition among teachers rather than an effort to improve rural schools' effectiveness (Aziz, 2011). This perception resulted

in minimised teacher competencies, capabilities and motivation for teaching at rural schools.

Rural school teachers were often overloaded with both teaching and administrative work which conflicted with their professional development ambitions (Hudson & Hudson, 2008). The result was then that rural school teachers did not have sufficient time to devote to their career development endeavours, which could have helped them to master improved teaching capabilities.

The cultural domains of the rural environment also posed a challenge to beginner teachers (Aziz, 2011; Lingam, 2012). Newcomer teachers who teach in rural schools encountered cultural backgrounds of learners that were different to their own cultural backgrounds. This mismatch in cultural orientations, necessitated multi-cultural studies in the teacher education programme. Urban schools are characterised by a collection of cultural identities to which it is easy for teachers to adapt. Unlike urban schools, schools in rural areas usually belonged to a community with one culture and value system, which may be different from that of the teacher. This made it difficult for teachers to adapt if no multi-cultural orientations was provided during teacher training and in employment, with a cripple effect on the quality of teaching.

It becomes clear that incompetence as a function of inadequate teacher training, existed in rural schools with negative implications to the quality of teaching. Factors pertaining to incompetency to function in a rural setting, include the migration pattern of qualified teachers to urban schools, training institutions not preparing teachers adequately for teaching careers in rural contexts, and a lack of in-service training to capacitate teachers in rural school teaching. The geographical location of rural schools impinges the delivery of support services, whereas negative perceptions prevail towards professional development. These shortcomings were complicated by the cultural backgrounds of learners in rural environments which in many instances were different to the cultural association of the newcomer teacher. The net effect of all these challenges impinges the quality of teaching among rural schools.

3.3 Isolation

Through consultation and being close to those sharing similar ideals, best practices are shared and obstacles are defeated (Giordano, 2008). Isolation by being far from other areas and communities that could provide support services was a disadvantage in terms of rural school teachers being prevented from gaining information about best educational practices and sharing teaching and learning resources. Such isolation has the risk of achieving a low standard of performance due to limited support services resulting in poor quality teaching.

Because of these detrimental effects of isolation on education and their impact on the quality teaching, several countries have implemented measures to bring their educational institutions together. One of these measures was the

implementation of a school cluster system. This system ensured that schools did not feel isolated, but shared resources with neighbouring schools. Despite the implementation of measures to bring together educational institutions, the problem of isolation still manifest itself among rural schools.

Isolation was felt by teachers at rural schools with regard to professional development. Teachers in rural areas were less likely to have opportunities to engage in professional development activities due to the remoteness of their schools which were distant from main towns where opportunities for professional development are available. This makes teachers feel professionally isolated as career advancement and opportunities for further studies are often unavailable or very difficult to arrange in the rural areas (Shadreck, 2012). Teachers therefore prefer to be posted in urban areas in order to have easy access to further education (Aziz, 2011; Elfer & Plecki, 2006; Mulkeen, 2006).

The physical remoteness of rural schools made teachers feel isolated as they were distant from accessing economic infrastructures (Redding & Walberg, 2012). To receive their salary teachers needed to travel to urban areas to access financial institutions such as banks for their payments (Mulkeen, 2006). The isolation of rural schools may involve the absence of teachers from schools for more than one day because, when teachers go to financial institutions to access their payment, they used the opportunity to do their shopping before returning to rural areas (Holloway, 2002). This arrangement impacts negatively on the quality of teaching in the sense of losing possible time needed for teaching lessons.

Rural communities are also isolated from health facilities. Teachers have raised health concerns in accepting offers to teach in rural schools as most rural health service centres are not easily accessible. A visit to a doctor that might take a day in an urban area can involve an absence of three or four days in rural areas (Mulkeen, 2006). This lengthy absence from work as a result of schools being isolated from essential health services negatively affected the quality of teaching at rural schools.

As rural environments were often severely impoverished and were associated with an aging population, unemployment and low quality of life, many teachers from urban backgrounds, were faced with challenges regarding recreation and socialising in rural areas, which adds to their job dissatisfaction (Monk, 2007). The lack of opportunities to meet new friends and to socialise hampered teachers' quality of life in rural areas.

Despite most teachers reporting isolations in rural communities, there were some teachers who originated from rural areas with their homes and families still based in rural areas. As they have grown up in a rural environment and were used to rural conditions, these teachers preferred to remain with their families and rendered assistance to their families. Teachers derived motivation to remain in rural areas because of familiarity with the environment and closeness to family.

Teachers had their families to look after, and they were happy with the rural environment. This implies that not all is negative about rural teaching, as living and working in a rural area can be rewarding. Rural areas were safe and a pleasing experience with nature and community members. Teachers who originated from rural areas did not feel isolated, but were content with their rural comfort zones. In addition to familiarity with the environment, the cost of living in rural areas was less demanding as compared to urban areas, especially when residing with family, which was common practice in rural areas.

It was established that isolation as associated with teaching in rural areas, impacted negatively on professional development opportunities, as well as to accessibility to financial, shopping and health care provisioning. Isolation as experienced in rural areas deprived teachers of socialising and meaningful leisure activities which impacted negatively on rural teachers' sense of quality of life.

3.4 Inadequate rewards

Hodgetts and Hegar (2005) maintains that the psychological drive that directs a person toward accomplishing an objective, is motivation which is defined as a set of processes that moves a person toward a goal. In order to teach well, teachers need to be motivated. Rewards as the measures that organisations implement in order to motivate employees while improving organisational performance, affect the motivation of teachers as employees (San, Theen & Heng, 2012).

For increased productivity such as ensuring that high learner performance takes place, it was imperative that rewards for teachers be realistic and adequate to motivate teachers for improved performance. Inadequate rewards and compensation for teachers and adverse working conditions as common to rural areas have detrimental effects on learner performance. Inadequate rewards were experienced in rural areas, which related mainly to remuneration and the lack of a financial incentive. Most teachers at rural schools were not well paid compared to their counterparts in other professions with comparable levels of education, experience and input towards their work (Adedeji & Olaniyan, 2011; Jimerson, 2003).

Salaries for teachers needed to be competitive in order to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, as in some instances teachers sustained their good performance irrespective of the salaries they were paid. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers can be achieved by increasing teacher rewards to a competitive level that would help address the status of the teaching profession, and elevating teacher salaries to a point competitive with what other comparable professionals earn (Jimerson, 2003). Adequate rewards in the form of competitive salaries ensure teacher motivation and retention while also improving the status of the teaching profession (Shadreck, 2014).

Low salaries of teachers have forced many teachers to find additional income to supplement their earnings, which

influenced their overall teaching performance negatively (Alam & Farid, 2011). For example, in Uganda, some teachers in rural schools spent fewer hours on classroom teaching in favour of their private work as a mean of supplementing their incomes which was reflected in poor performance by their learners (Mulkeen, 2006). Providing sufficient rewards to teachers would help solve this act.

Opportunities for teachers to earn additional income after work, from private coaching of learners and school based incentive, which were common in many urban areas, were limited in rural areas, mainly because of widespread poverty (Shadreck, 2014). Osterholm et al (2006) confirms that this situation of lack of opportunities to supplement low salaries is common to rural areas in America, thereby functioning as a major obstacle for teacher recruitment and retention. This obstacle affected negatively the quality of teaching at rural schools, as teacher migrated to urban areas to participate in opportunities for additional income.

In Nigeria, rural school teachers in the mid-western states were over-utilised, with a teaching workload of 26 periods while their urban counterparts were under-utilised with a teaching load of 16 periods (Ibadin, 2010). Yet, rural teachers did not get adequate rewards for being over-utilised. This demotivated teachers and led to teacher turnover since the rewards teachers were getting in return for the work done were not realistic. Lowe (2006) and Osterholm, Deborah and Johnson (2006) suggests offering incentive, bonuses and salary increases to teachers as a strategy for retaining them. However, the success of monetary benefits for improved teacher performance is a moot topic, as stated earlier. It was clear that inadequate rewards and compensation was common to teachers working in rural areas, relating to low salaries and rewards.

IV. SUMMARY

This paper reviewed the literature related to the challenges that faced teaching at rural schools. The challenges were revealed as being related to poor working conditions, teachers no competent to confront rural based issues, isolation from essential services and rewards not commensurate with the work done. Regarding poor working conditions, it was revealed that teaching in rural areas especially in developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa, was defined by the struggle to cope with the absence of basic teaching resources, overloaded with teaching and administrative duties, underfunding to schools and poor teacher salaries. The net effect of these struggles compromised the quality of teaching in rural schools.

Since rural areas were defined by harsh living conditions, most teachers were not well trained to teach in a rural setting, which rendered them incompetent in improvising instructional and teaching materials in the absence of sufficiency resources, to render teaching effective. The inabilities of teachers at rural areas to teach competently due to rural-based challenges, that

they were unable to confront, has rendered teaching ineffective.

Teachers in rural areas were less likely to have opportunities to engage in professional development activities due to the remoteness of their schools which were distant from main towns where opportunities for professional development were available. This makes teachers feel professionally isolated as career advancement and opportunities for further studies were often unavailable or very difficult to arrange in the rural areas. In addition, teachers have raised health concerns about financial, recreational and health service centres not easily accessible. This feeling of isolation added to teachers' job dissatisfaction, which crippled good quality teaching.

It was established that most teachers at rural schools were not well paid compared to their counterparts in other professions with comparable levels of education, experience and input towards their work. Low salaries of teachers has forced many teachers to find additional income to supplement their earnings, which influenced negatively their overall teaching performance, as manifested in learner achievements. In view of the above findings, a conclusion was made, as detailed in the next section.

V. CONCLUSION

The review provided evidence to back up the notion that teaching at rural schools was faced by numerous challenges, which relates to poor working conditions, teachers not being competent to teach in rural settings, isolation from essential services and rewards not commensurate with teaching loads. These challenges were thus responsible for deteriorated learner performance in rural schools, which was a function of teaching.

Thus, it can be generalised that if teaching was not effective, learning was not going to be effective as well and learners were not going to achieve desired performance. The challenges faced teaching in rural schools did not only posed threats to learners' performance levels though, but also posed threats to human resources provisioning at rural schools, as staff turnover was often experienced among rural schools. A better understanding of these challenges among educational stakeholders, could help to best design strategies for containing each of the strategies identified, so that sustained compromise to the quality of teaching among rural schools is prevented. In containing the challenges identified, recommendations were made, as revealed in the next section.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above conclusion, the study made the following recommendations:

- The ministry of education, through their relevant directorates and departments, should ensure improved working conditions of rural school teachers, by provisioning enough facilities, instructional resources and justifiable work overload.

- Curriculum planners should broaden the curriculum outcomes to entail adequate professional training and preparation of student teachers during their initial teacher training programme, during which student teachers are informed of all content and contextual rural-based issues teachers will be facing at rural schools. Provision of staff development opportunities and workshops to rural school teachers on how to teach in rural settings, should be conducted periodically.
- Provincial and regional government should liaise to ensure the provision of health, banking and recreation facilities to rural communities, in order to minimise the feelings of isolation and reduce teacher turnover in rural schools.
- Teachers' unions and ministry of education should pursue adequate rewards formula for teachers in the form of competitive salaries and proportionate rewards, to ensure teacher motivation and retention while also improving the quality of teaching.

It is believed that the consideration and subsequent implementation of the above recommendations by relevant stakeholders, will help minimizing the challenges facing teaching at rural schools, consequently maximizing the effectiveness of teaching.

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